

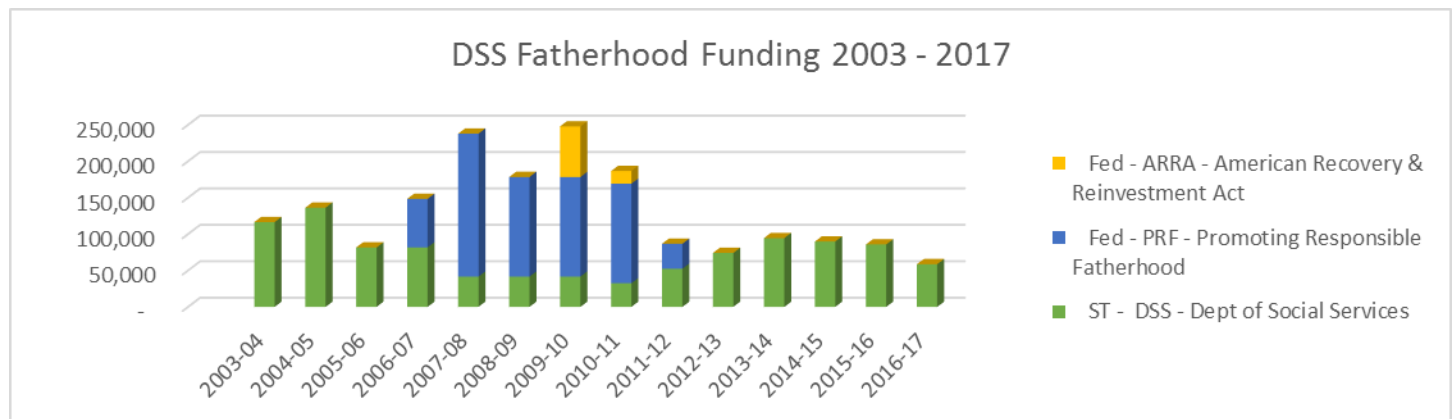


**Written Testimony of Nancy W. Gentes, Executive Director  
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**Prepared for the Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing – February 16, 2017  
Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed Budget**

My testimony is in opposition to the reduction and restructuring of funding for the State of Connecticut, Fatherhood Initiative Programming from the DSS budget. My concern is that by combining accounts and then reducing the entire account by 20%, it will be left to DSS and not the legislature to determine if or how much funding the Fatherhood Programs will receive.

Although I am very grateful that the program has not been eliminated in the Governor's budget, I am concerned about the detrimental effect that a cut of possibly 20% or higher will have on program delivery. The Fatherhood Programs have already sustained **significant reductions in funding from DSS; including a 32% cut in funding during this current fiscal year.**



**Why do we need to fund fatherhood programs? Fatherlessness is the number 1 factor contributing to child poverty and child poverty is associated with a host of negative consequences for children.**

Research has clearly demonstrated that children do better when fathers are positively involved in their lives. Fatherhood Programs are effective in connecting fathers to their children, preferably early in life and in breaking down barriers which prevent them from being fully involved and responsible fathers. These barriers that fathers present with include a history of incarceration, unemployment or underemployment, history of substance abuse, domestic violence, or mental illness, a poor relationship with the mother of their child (children), involvement with the Department of Children and Families, lack of housing, lack of reliable transportation, and a lack of basic needs resources.

**Madonna Place** has been part of the State Fatherhood Initiative since the inception of the legislation in 1999 and is one of six funded State certified sites that currently provides comprehensive services to fathers and other men who are significant in the lives of young children.

**Impact:** Fathers who participate in our programs are becoming and staying employed, paying child support, learning parenting skills and increasing the amount of positive time they spend with their children. They are becoming fully responsible fathers. Children and families are better off.

Connecticut has been a leader in the country for Fatherhood work thanks to the leadership started by John Martinez and Patricia Wilson Coker and supported by this legislature. I appreciate your continued support and consideration of this request to insure State Funding to Fatherhood does not lapse or decrease significantly.